



Spring into Step Notable Birds

By Diana Cormack

The Cherry Tree Wood Walk, which actually takes in part of Highgate Wood as well, is a good way to start the week. Led by park warden Chris Ward, the group sets off from the new cafe (which is still not open) opposite the tennis courts at 10 am on the first two Mondays of the month. It is also a very pleasant way of noticing the seasonal changes taking place and Chris is happy to point out interesting details en route.

Faster walkers keep pace with him, whilst Pat Orr of Park Hall Road acts as backmarker for the slower members of the group, so there is room for all standards. Both have been on training courses for the walks and carry rucksacks well equipped for any eventuality. The walks are free and form part of the *Walk for Life* scheme which aims to encourage people to walk regularly. Walking can improve your

health, relieve stress and help you sleep better. This way you can also make new friends and appreciate the beauties of nature right on your doorstep.

This particular walk lasts for an hour, but there are different ones available in the borough. Visit www.whi.org.uk or call 8359 7816 for more information. Otherwise, just turn up in the park at the appointed time and put your best foot forward.

By Jeremy Gaskell

Probably the most striking song heard at this time of year in East Finchley's woodlands, after the energetic singing of the Wren and the liquid notes of the Robin, is the repetitive phrase of the Great Tit. Similar, but higher pitched, is the ee-tu, ee-tu, ee-tu of the scarcer Coal Tit. Heard occasionally near Cherry Tree Wood, the song sounds remarkably similar to someone using a saw.

A second uncommon local bird is the Nuthatch, recognisable by its black bandit's mask. Recently in Coldfall Wood I observed one emerge from the cavity it had been preparing as a nest site, in order to confront a grey squirrel. The brief fracas resulted in the squirrel scampering up the tree as fast as it could.

The loud drumming of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker is typical of early Spring. However, hearing it on 1 January in Coldfall Wood reminded me how our expectations of the seasons have altered as global warming has gathered pace. This black, white and crimson bird is smaller and less shy of humans than its cousin the Green Woodpecker. The loud, laughing call of the Yaffle, to use its country name, may be heard in St Pancras cemetery where the bird is sometimes so engrossed in probing for ants that it fails to hear approaching footsteps and can be watched at close range.

Thrushes

A smaller bird than the Green Woodpecker, but one that looks similar from the rear, is the Mistle Thrush whose wild fluting song is often delivered from a high tree after a gale. A less obtrusive thrush, the Redwing, is quite numerous in the winter months. A blood-red patch on the flank gives this bird its name, but if you see a party of them in a field, or feeding on berries, it is probably the bird's prominent white eyebrow that is more noticeable.



Coal Tit By Thomas Bewick

Seaside visitors

During the short, dark days of winter, seagulls frequent the recreation grounds. The smallest you are likely to see, with red legs, is the Black-headed Gull whose name becomes more appropriate as the Spring draws on. A larger gull, with olive legs and bill, is the Common Gull, a bird less numerous than its name suggests. Occasionally these two gulls are joined by the Lesser Black-backed Gull, which has yellow legs. Recently this handsome species has been added to the list of London's breeding birds.

Increasingly our songsters will establish breeding territories; however, northern birds that winter with us have a longer wait till their breeding grounds are sufficiently thawed.

THE ARCHER would like to make it clear that the photo of the dog that appeared last month alongside our article about Wrigley's Woody was not that of Woody but of Buddy, the dog belonging to the East Finchley resident featured in the story!

Remembering D Day

6 June 2004 is the 60th anniversary of D Day.

- ▶ Were you there? ▶ Were you in the army?
- ▶ Were you at home? ▶ Were you at school?

If you or anyone you know has any memories of D Day, please contact THE ARCHER at the usual address.

Send your correspondence to:

"Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.
(Due to space restrictions, letters over 200 words will be edited)

RSPCA News

This month RSPCA News introduces their new Inspector, Natalie Bartle, who joined the local branch at the end of last year.

Natalie has a long record of work with the RSPCA. Five years as a voluntary worker before becoming an animal collection officer and, before that, she worked at the RSPCA's Norfolk Wildlife Hospital dealing with casual-

ties such as deer, foxes and badgers. She then did six months training at the RSPCA's Sussex Headquarters to emerge as a fully fledged Inspector.

She says, "It's a fresh challenge to do this, as no one day is the same as the next and so far I have had no problems I could not deal with."

The helpline is manned daily, evenings and weekends so, if anyone has concerns or would like advice or help on animal welfare, they can ring 0870 555 5999.

HGS

Best Spring Garden

Competition

Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society is looking for the prettiest or most interesting garden on the Suburb, or within the boundaries of Garden Suburb Ward.

Entry forms (please enclose SAE) are available from the Events Secretary, 86 Willifield Way, NW11 6YJ. The closing date for entries is 30 April and the gardens will be judged during the first week in May.

The first prizewinner will receive £25 in garden vouchers and the Millennium Suburb in Bloom cup, and the second and third prizewinners will receive £15 and £10 garden vouchers respectively.



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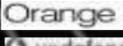
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